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# A recipe for better putting

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*Editor's note: GolfWeb has sifted through our writer's libraries and come up with "best-of" instruction features. Enjoy!*

Great putting requires two different, but equally important, mindsets.



**Larry Mize is one of the best at letting the club do the work.**

(Allsport file)

The first is learning the mechanics of a good putting stroke. The second, ruled by the intuitive side of the brain, allows imagination and creativity to guide performance.

Once you've learned the fundamentals, you must shift your thinking from practicing to making putts. Great putting comes from imagination, creativity and feel.

The ability to putt instinctively is critical. A free putting stroke develops from practice. The more you practice, the more you can trust your stroke when it's time to

play.

The problem is that most players don't allow their stroke to be reflexive. They practice on the course instead of focusing on making putts. Many players watch the putter head and try too hard to make a perfect stroke instead of responding to the target.

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The purpose of practice is to make the stroke reflexive and feel natural. When you play, let your instincts take over. Trying too hard to make putts only causes you to tighten up and interferes with your natural stroke.

[Larry Mize](#) knows that you can't try to make putts. "When I want to make a putt real bad," Mize said, "I know that's when I am in trouble. That's just not a good way to putt, you start putting pressure on yourself when you want to make it real bad ... that is when you tighten up."

Once on the course, you should become target-oriented. Focus on the tempo of your stroke or the feel of solid contact, but not swing path or face angle. The putter will square up to the target if you've practiced your stroke enough and can let it go.

Shift your focus to seeing your line, focusing on the ball and launching the ball to the target. Use your imagination to "feel" the ball to the hole, don't "stroke it" to the hole.

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## Accessing your putting potential

The putter is the most important club in your bag. It's the club you use more than any other. A hot putter is what makes a champion.

The mental art of putting is the true challenge. Putting, more than the long game, is a test of a player's emotional stability and patience.

Our emotions, feelings, and thoughts bring a new dimension to a simple physical task. Just a bit of tension or fear can throw off the best stroke. A flicker of doubt can cause a golfer to be tentative or steer the stroke.

When in a slump, players search for "the secret" to making putts. These players switch to a new putter, change their technique or alter their putting routine. They don't understand that the secret to making putts is inside them.

You have to start with the belief that you have putting potential. This is the first step in using your mind to putt your best.

What follows are six of the most important keys to using your mind to putt your best:

- **A positive attitude and approach**

Good putters love to putt. They don't fear it. You can't putt well if you go into a round wondering if you are going to putt poorly. Take a positive approach and challenge yourself to putt well.

- **High putting confidence**

Confidence means believing in your skills, and in putting you must have conviction that you can make putts. Confidence comes from practice, making putts on the course, developing touch and believing in your ability.

- **Strong sense of touch**

One of the most important skills is the ability to control speed. Most three-putts are caused by poor distance control. Touch also influences the line you select, which in turn depends on pace. When selecting a line for a breaking putt, you must dial in the right speed or the putt won't hold its line.



**At the Shark Shootout, Norman had his putter working to near perfection down the stretch.** (Allsport file)

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- **An execution focus**

The goal is to make putts. All golfers know this, but you can't focus on making or missing. You have to focus on the ingredients of the task that will help you make putts such as: reading the green, selecting a line, aiming to a target and allowing your instincts to take over.

- **Imagination and vision**

You must be able to read greens and see the line. Imagination allows you to predict the line of your putt that your ball must

travel to go in the hole. The better you can read breaks and see the line, the more putts you will make.

- **Trust your stroke**

Once you have a consistent stroke, putting becomes a visual and mental task. A practice stroke allows you to focus on the line and speed. Let your instincts take over when it comes to the stroke and focus on hitting your line with the right pace.

Everyone has had a great putting round or a stretch of holes in which they putted well. Think back to when you had a great putting round. The secret to great putting is within you. Now you have to tap into it and access your putting genius.

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## **Mental keys to a positive putting routine**

The use of preshot routines in sports is not new. Basketball players use a preshot routine at the foul line. Baseball players use a routine in the batter's box and on the pitcher's mound. And bowlers use a preshot routine before each shot.

Preshot routines in golf help players eliminate doubt, focus on execution and trust their stroke.

To me, the most important part is the mental routine, or programming your mind and body for a successful putt.

- **Get Your Best Read**

Frankly, if you can't read greens you can't make putts. A practice round is the best time to get to know the greens. Also, observing other players' putts and chips can help you see the break.

Go with your first instinct, and don't forget to get low to the ground so you can better see undulations.

- **Pick a line and a target**

After reading the green, use your imagination to see a line. As you squat behind your ball, see it rolling towards the cup.

I prefer you pick a spot equidistant to the hole to aim your putter. This makes every putt a straight putt in your mind.



**Bob Murphy's putting stroke is a smaller version of his long, slow full swing.** (Allsport file)

[Greg Norman](#) once said, "Never hit a putt until you have a good vision of the path in which it will roll."

- **See the ball go in the hole**

Good putting is about vision and feel. After you select a line, now is the time to imprint a powerful image of the ball rolling on its line into the hole.

[Bob Murphy](#) is an example of a feel putter. He said, "I don't worry about position, I just walk

in behind a putt, wiggle around until I get comfortable and then I hit it."

- **Stay line-and-target-focused**

Your eyes want to play tricks with your mind on the green. As you move from behind the ball and walk up to address the putt, perception changes and so does your recognition of the line.

It's critical that you don't take your mind and eyes off your target. Stay fixated on your line and the target you picked out.

- **Keep your eyes over the line**

Golf is a target game, and aiming is the key to hitting your target. Poor aim leads to compensations in the stroke.

After you aim your putter, align your body around the putter head. Don't try to be too precise when aiming so you can't pull the

trigger when it's time to stroke the ball.

- **Fire away with a natural stroke**

Most players' routines flow well until the moment of truth when it's time to pull the trigger. Doubt, hesitation and indecision can ruin a great putting routine. Trying to stroke the ball on line only increases tension and ruins your natural stroke.

- **Accept the results**

This is the final step in a solid routine. The post shot or post-putt reaction is very important. You need to release the past and get into the present moment before your next shot.

Dwelling on a miss won't help you make putts. If you want to putt well, be objective and accept what happens. Walk off each green thinking of at least one thing you did well. This will help you make a more confident stroke on the next hole.

**Editor's note:** Instruction features appear every Wednesday on GolfWeb.

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